

Measure 1: Fast Track Processing For Felony Cases

A. Background

The fast track program was created in 1996 to expedite the processing of certain kinds of felony cases in order to reduce both the jail population and criminal court caseloads. The Jail Oversight Commission's final report isolated a goal of having hearing dates 30 days from arraignment, instead of the current 45 days. This would have the effect of reducing the average disposition from 119 days to an estimated 60 days.

B. Before and After the JOC

The two JOC recommendations regarding Fast Track have not been implemented. Most of the statistics used by the JOC regarding Fast Track's effectiveness came from the Ninth Circuit Court Disposition Study conducted in Orange County in 1999. The text of that study noted that a new national study regarding court processing statistics was forthcoming from the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The new BJS study covers 1998 national data and provides an additional comparison to the Court Disposition Study. The table below illustrates how Orange County compares to the national study.

Source	% of Cases Resolved in 180 Days	Median Felony Case Disposition Time
Ninth Circuit Court Disposition Study	76%	125 Days
1998 BJS Study	75%	79 Days
1996 BJS Study	71%	89 Days
ABA Performance Standards	98%	—

C. Conclusions

The original Ninth Circuit Court Disposition Study heavily emphasized the case processing time difference with the 1996 BJS study. The 1998 BJS study reports a 10 day decrease in processing time. Any change in processing time within the Ninth Circuit would be a mystery because an update to the Disposition Study is ongoing. This study must be updated and improved in order to assess any economic impact. In terms of developing a benchmark, the most straightforward approach seems to be using the national average reported in the 1998 BJS study. This would represent a 46 day reduction in the disposition times of certain felony cases.